

# YESTERDAYS

... in and  
around Pomfret, N. Y.

BOOK V

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man, accumulated considerable wealth. The hard working land owners thought this was at their expense and many charges were made against him. One was that he had reserved the best land for himself and his friends. The land owners also believed that he was not giving them credit for interest which they had paid upon their land.

These views were published in the newspapers and served to increase the agitation which was already present until it resulted in a gathering at Dewittville or Hartfield of persons from all over the county. This was Feb. 6, 1836.

Mr. Peacock received word that a raid was to be made upon the land office that night and that harm might be done to him. Fortunately for the agent, a northwestern fur trader, Donald McKensie, who had been a resident of Mayville for three years, was in the land office when the news came.

Mr. McKensie's usual dress was a long black coat. Since Mr. Peacock was an undersized man it was easy for his friend to shield him by draping the coat about the frightened man thus protecting him from sight. Mr. Peacock was hurried up the hill to his home and was

shortly placed in a covered sleigh and driven to Westfield and down the lake shore to either Buffalo or Erie.

The escape of William Peacock was just in time, as a crowd of 200 or 300 persons descended upon the land office, almost demolishing it. Working until the early morning hours the vault was finally forced open. The books, records and contracts which were seized, were carried two miles away, heaped upon a fire and burned.

The land owners gained little for themselves while Mr. Peacock accumulated a great deal of property. One of his heirs alone inherited the entire village of Barcelona, Westfield's harbor, located just east of the mouth of the Chautauqua Creek, the starting point of the French portage road. Mr. Peacock later was made a judge. When he died his heirs each received 1-13th of his vast estate.

In June 1836, four months after the destruction of the land office at Mayville, William H. Seward having been appointed to the agency and having an interest in the purchase, established the land office in Westfield. Mr. Seward lived there until his election as governor of New York.

## Seth Cole

To those who are interested in our local history the name of Seth Cole is familiar. He is recognized as having been the first settler in the area which is now Dunkirk. At that time all the land in the vicinity belonged to the Town of Pomfret and not until Nov. 17, 1859 was Dunkirk separated from Pomfret. Coming from Paris, Oneida County, in 1805 Seth Cole and

Seth Cole, son of Consider Cole Sr., was born in Chesterfield, Mass., in 1756 and passed away in Pomfret June 10, 1810. He was married to Celia Sanford in Chesterfield. This early set-

tlement was laid to rest in our Pioneer Cemetery on East Main street, Fredonia, and his grave is marked with a government marker. Beside him rests Arvilla Cole, believed to be the only daughter of his sister, Polly Cole Brown.

Seth Cole, as his father considered and as many of our pioneers had done, served in the Revolutionary War. His war record shows two enlistments in 1777, one in May and one in September, also two later enlistments of nine months each.

Upon the arrival of the Cole and Cushing families in Canada, Zattu Cushing bought land on both sides of the Canadaway Creek near its mouth. Seth Cole purchased a few acres from Cushing and more from the Holland Land Co., paying \$3.33 per acre for it.

It is said that the first site chosen by the Cole family was on the east bank of the Canadaway, a beautiful cove. This site was later occupied by the Witt family who ran a saw mill with the mill race along the east bank. It is believed after living here but a short time the Cole family moved to a site on the west bank.

Of great interest is the fact that the Cole home is standing today although it has been moved several times and there have been many changes to the building since the days of the original hewn beams and hand split laths. The property, after having been in the possession of the Widow Cole and then a son, Erastus, came into the hands of the Lang family. The original one-story Cole house was added to the two-story Lang home.

The Cole house, believed to be the first home built in present Dunkirk, now stands as a part of the attractive white building on the property of the Holy Cross Seminary and is

plainly visible from Route 5. It is occupied by employees of the Seminary. Thus the home of Seth Cole, the Revolution army soldier, and his wife, the courageous Widow Cole, still stands in a beautiful setting but still unmarked.

Seth Cole, contracted by Elliott, cleared a road from the town line between Pomfret and Portland to Silver Creek, a road in width, for \$10 a mile. Our present Route 5 quite closely follows the original road. The Cole family was largely responsible for the establishing of a road from their home leading in to the present Chestnut Street (Fredonia). This path they cleared when riding horse back and driving their teams.

The Widow Cole proved herself a heroine during the War of 1812. Her great courage is mentioned in books of history.

She served as patrol, spread the alarm among the settlers when a salt boat anchored in the mouth of the creek, dashed to Canadaway for additional help for the men stationed near her home, served the men food and drink, and melted her pewter dishes, even her precious tea pot, to make bullets. This conflict has been called the first naval fight after the declaration of war.

Erastus, a volunteer in the militia, was absent at Lewiston at this time, being stationed during this War of 1812 on the Niagara Frontier. He was at Buffalo when it was attacked that year by the British and Indians. The bodies of Erastus and his wife, Sally Burch, lie buried in the Fredonia Forest Hill Cemetery. The first road to the left from the main entrance leads past the Erastus Cole monument.

The other children of Seth and Celia Sanford Cole were Seth, Jr., Vareness, Polly, Semth, Maria, Minerva and Nancy.

tering as a private and being promoted for gallantry to the rank of an officer and being made aide-de-camp to Colonel Willets.

It is probable that John Spencer did not become deeply interested in religion until after 25 years of age. When he finally began his theological studies with the Rev. Dr. David Porter, pastor of the church at Spencertown, he was living in a new settlement of Otsego County. On Oct. 29, 1800, he was licensed by the Northern Associated Presbytery to preach the Gospel and was ordained by the same body at Stillwater in October 1801. Although Mr. Spencer united with the Presbytery he was a Congregationalist.

It was at the age of nearly 50 that "Father Spencer," as he was affectionately and respectfully known, came to the Holland Purchase bringing with him his wife, the former Rebecca Spencer, whom he married in 1782, and their children. They settled near Sheridan on property later occupied by William Elliott.

The missionary priest, although but medium height was strong, muscular and capable of great endurance. He was plain and simple in his habits and could readily adapt himself to all circumstances. His humor, evidenced by his ever-ready anecdotes, but never displayed while preaching, endeared him to the settlers.

The dress of this religious ambassador was strange. His clothes were of the style of the Revolutionary days, short breeches with knee buckles, long stockings and boots quite up to the knees. After a number of years his short clothes became so worn that he found it necessary to replace them. This he did with more thought of a modern style.

The Rev. Spencer first travel-

led on foot, later on horseback. Hardly was a cabin begun before there was a call from him. The fact that he was a devoted Congregationalist was of little importance to the pioneer since the matter of the differences in religious denominations was readily accepted. While riding mile after mile through the wilderness he studied his Bible and preached from farm to farm.

David Eaton, an early settler of Portland, wrote of this missionary: "As new settlements were formed off the main road he was sure to penetrate there and preach an evening lecture, and preach on the Sabbath wherever the day overtook him. He was very formal in his devotional exercises, in words, but not in manner."

He comforted the ill, performed marriages, and in the winter funeral services were postponed, the bodies being kept, until Father Spencer's arrival. He was a tireless worker. His great comfort and guidance to the pioneers was one of those sustaining factors which can never be weighed or measured.

Many societies and 13 churches in our present Chautauqua County were formed by him. Among them the First Presbyterian of Pomfret in 1810, Kian tone in 1815, Elllicott in 1816 and Portland in 1818. The first meeting place in Sheridan was the home of Orsamus Holmes, the first religious service being held in 1807 and the first real society formed there Nov. 18, 1809.

Father Spencer continued his services as missionary until 1824 when infirmities of age overtook him and he was forced to resign. He settled over a church in the present town of Busti where he died Aug. 24, 1826. He was brought back to Sheridan and laid to rest in the small West Sheridan Cemetery land, part of his farm which he

Presbyterian and Congregational Churches which existed in this region where he rested from his labors in 1826, aged 68 years. He tread a useful but laborious path to immortality in the arduous and unremitting exercise of doing good."

Beside him rests his devoted wife Rebecca.

## More Early Taxpayers and Settlers

District No. 3—Riemus, William, Ephriam Peas, Loomis, Mark Stacey, Hugh Lovejoy, George W. Pierce.

District No. 4—Hezekiah Turner, Jonah Johnson, Standish W. Pierce, Riemus Wilcox, Ephriam Simmond, Samuel Marsh, Samuel Marsh Jr., Daniel S. Cole, Mrs. Cole, William Barker.

District No. 7—David John

son, William Gould, Abel Prior, David Getchel, Orsamus Holmes, John Walker, Seth Spencer, Jonathan Brigham, Fred Bare, Haven Brigham, Matthew M. Cassety, Tilley Hamilton, Andrew Bates, Elisha Grey, Daniel Hibbard, Luke Coon, Uriah Lee, Jon Lee, Worthy Allen, Ozear Hart, Elder Sweet, Abner Holmes.

District No. 8—Samuel Davis, Henry Gates, Wood, Amos Morse, Eliphalet Burnham, James Butler, John Van Tapen, Jonathan L. Bartoo, Thomas Bull, Edward McGreger, Israel Lewis, Jon Harrington.

District No. 12—Thaddeus Barnard, Ludius (?) Groves, Rufus Scott, Jno. Giles, John Bridge, Buthel Willoughby.

District No. 15—Daniel Holbrook, William Holbrook, Samuel Swan, Abner Cooley, Arad Cooley, Andrew Lumas, David Pattison, William Pat-

erson, Jeremiah Stoddard, Benjamin Barnes (?) Jonathan Webber, John Beman, David Garner, Thomas Stebbins.

District No. 17—Barzillai Spencer, Edmund Spencer, Amasa Clark, Amos Tuttle, Henry Johnson, Ezekial Lane, Josiah Starling, Nathan Jones, Justus Jones, Jacob Jones, William Jones, Joseph Hadsdale, Nathan Cole, Thomas Nichols, Samuel Nichols, Amasa Ingrain, William Ingrain, Ephraim Hall, Benjamin Knixon.

District No. 19—R. Goldsmith, Jonah Childs, Wetherby, John Lewis, Joseph Brown, Ebenezer Brown, Benjamin Quinsey (?), Frederick Lewis, Enoch Lewis, John S. Pitt.

Of the original purchasers of land in the town of Pomfret not all of them settled here the same year of their purchase, some had settled here previously, some settled later and some did not remain here at all.

The first recorded contract for land in Pomfret was that of Thomas McClintock who purchased land within our present village of Fredonia in December, 1803. The first three settlers were McClintock, David Eason and Low Miniger. In 1806 and 1807 they sold out to Hezekiah Barker, Zattu Cushing and others, and they removed to the Cross Roads, now West-

ening a week. As many as could took a Murray's Grammar, Murray's English Reader, Milton's "Paradise Lost" and a tallow candle to class.

At one time there was a small school house on the Houghtor property on West Hill. A lady who had attended school there when she was but five or six years old, wrote that she remembered especially the joy of handing out water in a tin pail, giving each pupil a drink from the old tin dipper.

## Two Courageous Women

The pioneer women who accompanied their husbands to this uninhabited and desolate country are deserving of more than honorable mention. To narrate their self-denying deeds, most of which have been left untold and unwritten, would require volumes of space. We know of the unusual heroic acts of but a few of our early local women settlers although, without doubt, equally brave deeds of many others have never been related or have been forgotten and hence those names do not appear on the scroll of the country's famous women.

There are many stories of the courage of Mrs. Sophia Morton Williams, wife of Richard Williams, the sub-contractor who was responsible for carrying mail between Erie, Pa., and Buffalo. This service was usually performed by the son, Abner, until he volunteered to serve with Commander Perry's fleet. After his death, which occurred while serving his country in this capacity, Mr. Williams or a younger son cared for the mail route.

Mrs. Williams had a large household. Her 13 children and a number of settlers and workers completely filled the little home. She was a very energetic person and one who

wilderness. She slept at night in the forest. The swift rivers she forded by swimming her horses but she arrived in time to be of great service to her daughter's family who were very seriously ill.

Another woman who heroically served her country and her community was Mrs. Cole, the widow of the Revolutionary soldier, Seth Cole. The family had settled at the mouth of Canadaway Creek on land which they bought in 1805. After the death of her husband Mrs. Cole remained in the home. Her son, Erastus, was a volunteer in the militia and in 1812 was at Lewistown.

A company of militia from Col. McMahan's regiment, under the leadership of Capt. Tubbs was stationed at Widow Cole's in July of that year to protect small craft on Lake Erie from being seized by the British. The first exchange of hostilities occurred when the British attempted to capture a salt boat on its way from Buffalo to Erie.

The salt boat found its way into Canadaway Creek at night and there sought shelter. The British cruiser anchored about one-fourth mile from the shore

and in the morning sent out a small boat with 13 armed men to attack the salt boat. The swift el gun had been removed from the salt boat to the crotch of a tree from which position it was easy to fire. Capt. Tubbs and his men who had been concealed on the east side of the creek ran up the bank and fired. The British boat retreated.

Mrs. Cole played an important part in the encounter, serving as patrol, and then when she felt additional help was needed she mounted her horse and rode to Canadaway (Fredonia) and summoned assistance. Upon her return to the scene which has been considered the first naval fight after the declaration of war, she served the little army by carrying them food and drink.

Mrs. Cole further showed her great patriotism by melting her pewter, including her precious tea pot, into bullets, which were used as ammunition by one of her sons for the purpose of repelling the British while he and the neighbors patrolled the area about the mouth of the Canadaway Creek. The Widow Cole is often referred to as the heroine of the War of 1812.

## Maple Syrup and Sugar

Among the seasonal activities which helped to make the lives of the pioneers of this frontier busy ones was that of making maple syrup and sugar.

The methods and equipment used in this occupation today are quite different from the primitive ones. In recalling the early means it is amazing to realize how resourceful our settlers were as well as the Indians from whom, without doubt, the process of sugar making was learned.

In preparation for sap collect-

ing there was the necessity of making sap spouts. One member of the household would go into the field and cut sumac shoots about the size of a man's thumb. At home he would saw these into pieces five or six inches long. Each piece would be cut with a saw about one-third of the way through, some two inches from the end. The longer piece would then be cut out with a sharp knife leaving the round piece approximately two inches long. After cutting the pith out

of the long piece he would